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PRESS RELEASE

Date/Time of Release: Tuesday, July 15, 2014
Date/Time of Occurrence: Tuesday, July 15, 2014
Nature of Event: Phones scams on the rise
Location of Call: Placer County, CA
Released by: Dena Erwin, PIO (530) 889-6901

SHERIFF EDWARD N. BONNER RELEASES THE FOLLOWING:

Placer County is getting hit hard by phone scams. While there is nothing new about phone scams, savvy scammers are making money by using new tactics.

Victims have reported to the Placer County Sheriff's Office that they were contacted by someone saying they are from PG&E or another utility service. The victim is told that their service will be shut off if there is not an immediate payment made. The victim is instructed to make the payment using "Green Dot MoneyPaks." One local victim who was scammed in this manner is out \$2,900.

The second scam seen recently is when a victim gets a call from someone claiming to be a family member in jail or in a medical facility. The victim is instructed to send a "Moneygram" to a specified location.

A Green Dot MoneyPak is a prepaid card usually used by people who don't have bank accounts. The cards are available at retail stores for \$4.95. They can be loaded with up to \$500 at most retailers or \$1,000 if used at Walmart, and then used to shop online or to add money to a PayPal account.

Victims are told to buy a Green Dot MoneyPak card, load it with a specific amount of cash, and transfer the serial number to the swindler who then transfers the money to another card.

Scammers like using Green Dot MoneyPak cards because it isn't linked to a bank account and just like cash, it's untraceable. Unlike cash, though, the transaction can be done over the phone, so it's totally anonymous, making it just about impossible to catch the criminal. Also, the card offers no consumer protection from fraud, so the victim isn't getting their money back.

The Placer County Sheriff's Office wants to remind citizens to never give personal information to a stranger - be wary of anyone who calls on the phone trying to collect a debt. Look up the phone number of the organization the caller claims to represent (not the number on the caller ID) and check on your account with that utility service. If you have been scammed, contact your local law enforcement agency to file a report.